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Robert L. Barry

Current
Policy
No. 793

The Stockholm Conference and East-West Relations

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

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Following is an address by Ambassador Robert L. Barry, head of the U.S. delegation to the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, before the Royal Institute for International Affairs, London, February 4, 1986.

The Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe resumed work 1 week ago with a meeting attended by Foreign Minister Genscher of the Federal Republic of Germany and Foreign Minister Dumas of France. The remarks of the two foreign ministers stressed the importance their countries attach to the Stockholm conference as a key instrument for enhancing European stability and security. They spoke as Europeans and described Stockholm as a dimension of a European process, the Helsinki CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] process of cooperation and security building.

The United States attaches equally great importance to the Stockholm conference, and we share with our allies the vision of a Europe of independent states joined in cooperation rather than separated by mistrust and confrontation. We are not geographically a European nation, but we are tied to Europe: militarily to the defense of Western Europe; politically to the complementary goals of increased West European integration and the lowering of the barriers between East and West. Our participation in the Stockholm conference is a demonstration of this commitment to Europe.

Just before leaving Washington for Stockholm, I met with President Reagan. He issued a statement stressing the two dimensions of the Stockholm conference, military and political, and the important implications success there would have for the overall East-West relationship. The President underlined the contribution Stockholm could make to European security in the larger sense, that which encompasses political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian—human rights—as well as strictly military matters. "The attainment of this broader concept of security," the President said, "is the fundamental objective of the United States."

The President also expressed his belief that the Stockholm conference could succeed in reaching an accord this year, a belief echoed by Minister Genscher and Minister Dumas last week. There is, in fact, a very good chance the conference will achieve what it was set up to do: establish a military confidence-building regime which could reduce the risk of military confrontation in Europe. In doing so, it would increase stability in the European military situation in the near term and give a political impulse to greater openness and cooperation between East and West.

Developing an Effective Confidence-Building Regime

If an agreement is reached in Stockholm, it will be similar in outline to the proposals NATO tabled at the beginning of the conference in January 1984. It will establish a mandatory confidence-building regime consisting of measures requiring exchange of information about military forces in Europe and requiring that significant movements from normal locations be forecast a year in advance, described in more detail several weeks in advance, and observed by teams from other participating states. There will be adequate verification measures, including onsite inspection. There will be language reaffirming, but not redefining, the principle of non-use of force.

In contrast to the confidence-building measures in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which were largely political in significance because they were voluntary and lacked any provision for verification, these measures would have a real impact on the conduct of military affairs. Indeed, the broader political implications of a Stockholm agreement would flow from the practical military significance of the measures we agreed on.

In the view of the United States and our allies, this confidence-building regime coming out of Stockholm should accomplish several ends.

Risk Reduction. An agreement would reduce the risk of military confrontation arising from ambiguity about the nature of military activities and the intentions behind them. It would do this by requiring a routine exchange of information concerning military forces and their normal exercise practices which would, over time, develop a pattern of normal military activity in Europe. Es-

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tablishing the data base which defined this pattern may take a few years, but once established, it could become the norm against which all military activity on the Continent would be judged. Conformity with such a norm could contribute to increased stability as well as greater predictability in the overall military situation. On the other hand, extraordinary military activity, determined by reference to the established norm, would become readily identifiable with the result that appropriate political and, if required, military countermeasures could be taken. Conformity with a pattern would serve the confidence-building aspect of a confidence- and security-building regime, while identifying deviations from the norm would be useful for the security-building aspect.

Use of Military Force for Political Intimidation. By requiring states to publish a schedule of activities far in advance, the confidence-building regime we are discussing would inhibit the use of military force for political purposes. Europe has seen too many examples of the use of so-called military exercises for the purpose of political intimidation, for example, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1981. A mandatory confidence-building regime providing for forecasting, notification, observation, and inspection would not prevent such events in the future. But it would raise the political price to a threatening state and, thus, help to deter the threat. And inspection and observation would provide a clearer indication of the intent behind such sudden, large-scale activities. Since uncertainty about intent is a major factor in intimidation, an effective confidence-building regime would help counter intimidation.

Confidence Building and Openness. Requiring states to announce in advance a schedule for the activities of their forces would contribute greatly to predictability and stability. Consider the significance of 35 countries with very different security requirements and political ties agreeing that they would initiate no significant military activities without first announcing and explaining them formally and in detail in advance. Both militarily and politically, establishing the principle of openness and the right of states to know about the military intentions and activities of others—East, West, and neutral and nonaligned—would be of precedent-setting importance. Military commanders understand, I believe, the stabilizing effect that the correct degree of openness in military affairs affords. They accept the idea that intelligence information can indicate, with a considerable degree of assurance, whether their military activities are routine and nonthreatening in character. The confidence-building regime which we envision would expand openness and, thus, increase this assurance about the nature of activities through overt mutual cooperation. Exaggerated claims for military secrecy belong to the past; real confidence and security building requires that we put outmoded practices behind us.

When we discuss openness among states, we touch upon the fundamental objective of U.S. policy which President Reagan emphasized: a Europe without barriers, where people of all countries can communicate with one another, travel freely, exchange ideas of all kinds, for the enrichment of all. In Stockholm, we deal with military exchange, and the need to find an alternative to secretiveness and confrontation in the military field is, perhaps, particularly evident. But relations at the military level are a reflection of relationships on more basic political, cultural, and economic levels. Stockholm can ease suspicion and increase openness and understanding through a confidence-building regime in the military field, but success there will also contribute to improvement between East and West across the spectrum of the relationship.

The concept of openness, whether in military affairs or in other fields, is an issue of great sensitivity to some of the participants in the Stockholm conference, especially to the Soviet Union. But my impression is that this sensitivity is lessening as a new generation comes to power in the Soviet Union. I am particularly encouraged that the Soviet leadership seems to have accepted the principle of onsite inspection as a necessary element of verifiability, as evidenced by a number of recent statements, including General Secretary Gorbachev's January 15 proposals.

Although there has been no indication yet that the principle has been accepted for risk reduction activities as opposed to arms reductions activities, I see no reason why it should not be; Western inspection and observation proposals in the Stockholm context are less intrusive than elsewhere because they involve dynamic activities which, unlike static ones, do not require entry into sensitive installations.

The Soviet attitude is evolving positively in other areas as well. At the beginning of the conference, the East took a very polemical approach and advanced proposals not for practical, concrete confidence- and security-building measures but, rather, for declaratory measures on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapons-free zones, reduction of military budgets, and the like, which represented their political agenda for Western Europe. In the past year, the East has gradually adopted a more practical and constructive approach. They have been more forthcoming on important procedural and substantive issues. In October, they joined with the other participants in accepting an informal working arrangement which focused the attention of the conference on specific measures with real military content.

Also in October, during his visit to Paris, Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev accepted the idea of an exchange of annual schedules for military activities—a measure which both NATO and the neutral and nonaligned had proposed. In Geneva last November, Mr. Gorbachev joined President Reagan in asking for an early and successful conclusion of the Stockholm conference. Last month, in his statement of January 15, Mr. Gorbachev reaffirmed the commitment to progress, as President Reagan did on January 21.

Areas of Difference

In sum, the East has moved closer to the approach laid out in the conference mandate, on which the West based its package of proposals. One reason for the change is that NATO was well-prepared for this conference and has been patient and firm in the face of efforts to divert the agenda from military security to political issues. The East does want an agreement which will allow continuation of some kind of European security conference, and they must realize that the only agreement within reach is one which fulfills the mandate criteria and is concrete, practical, militarily significant, and verifiable.

I have already identified verifiability as the essential element of an agreement and an area where East and West have not yet been able to establish common ground. A second area of difference relates to information exchange. The East continues to object to a comprehensive exchange, describing it as an attempt to legalize espionage. The final Eastern position on information, as on inspection, will be a good indicator of just how far they are prepared to accept the concept of openness, which is the underlying premise of any confidence-building regime.

A third problem area has been the question of what types of military activity are to be covered. In our view, the

Madrid mandate established what we call the functional approach. That is, air and naval activities are covered when they are functionally related to ground force activities; indeed, such combined arms activities are the only kind which have real military significance in the European context. The East has tried to include so-called independent air and naval activities in the measures under discussion, an attempt which the West has rejected. Now it appears that the East is willing to have an agreement which does not include independent naval activities. That removes a major obstacle in the talks. Inherently unverifiable independent air activities should also be set aside.

Relation to Arms Control, Security, and Human Rights

I believe that the will exists to overcome these obstacles. So let me try to relate success in Stockholm to the larger picture of arms control and East-West relations. The two tracks of arms reduction, on the one hand, and confidence building leading to risk reduction, on the other, are mutually reinforcing. We hope for success in Geneva and in Vienna—significant reduction in nuclear and conventional arms. If we can accomplish these reductions, they will, in themselves, build confidence and, thus, result in a more stable world. In the meantime, successful confidence building can help to pave the way for arms reductions.

The kind of regime we are trying to create in Stockholm would, if complied with, give a political impulse to other negotiations. Stockholm is also breaking new ground in another area. It is the only security forum which includes all the European states, except for Albania. It has stimulated the first serious formal exchange among the neutral and nonaligned states on security-related issues, resulting in the emergence of a common position on the issues before the conference. This, in turn, has made them see more clearly some of the complexities and difficulties involved with the arms reduction efforts, which are also important to them.

Success in Stockholm could have a positive effect on the entire range of East-West relations, as both President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev have independently recognized. To cite just one example, it could move the entire Helsinki CSCE process ahead. The CSCE followup meeting, which opens in Vienna in November of this year, will evaluate progress in all aspects of the Helsinki Final Act. That means examining developments in human rights as well as progress in the security field. For the United States and its NATO allies, balance among all 10 principles of the CSCE is essential to the continuation of the process.

Developments on humanitarian and human rights issues in the East since the Madrid review meeting of 1980–83 have not been encouraging. Nor can we point to notable success at the post-Madrid meetings such as the Ottawa human rights forum [Ottawa Human Rights Experts Meeting] or the Budapest Cultural Forum. We can hope for success at the Bern Human Contacts Meeting later this year, but, in any case, the Vienna conferees will not have a very bright picture to contemplate. A meaningful and politically binding Stockholm agreement, strictly complied with by all participating states, will make it easier for Vienna to decide on continuing the Stockholm security forum in some form after the CSCE review concludes its work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me note that our work in Stockholm lacks the drama of dealing with vital nuclear issues, as the Geneva negotiators do. As [NATO Secretary General] Lord Carrington pointed out in a speech to the Swedish Institute of International Affairs last week, the pace of our work has been something less than electric, although he also pointed out that, compared to our MBFR [mutual and balanced force reductions] colleagues in Vienna, we have been almost reckless in our haste. So it is little wonder that our efforts have gone largely unnoticed, both in the media and in our foreign offices. But, as the clock runs out on our deliberations, things are beginning to happen. Keep your eye on us for the 23 negotiating weeks remaining to us, and you may see something interesting—and important—begin to emerge. ■

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Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • February 1986
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